



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**SEVERAL KEY WILDLIFE AREAS, ENDANGERED SPECIES
ARE OF CONCERN IN HUNTINGTON BEACH OIL SPILL**

John Turner, director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, today announced that the agency has stationed several technical experts at the U.S. Coast Guard's Marine Safety Office in Long Beach, California, the site of the Huntington Beach oil spill command center. They are providing assistance on bird collection and rehabilitation. Under an agreement with the State of California, the California Department of Fish and Game will direct any cleaning and rehabilitation efforts for oiled wildlife species.

"Interior Secretary Lujan and I are concerned about the potential threat this spill poses to four key wildlife areas in Southern California--upper Newport Bay, Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge, the Bolsa Chica salt marsh, and the mouth of the Santa Ana River," Turner said. "Damage to wetland habitat in these areas could affect endangered species, such as the light-footed clapper rail, peregrine falcon, salt marsh bird's beak (a plant), the brown pelican, and, at later times of year, the California least tern."

Upper Newport Bay is home to 71 percent of the entire U.S. population of the light-footed clapper rail, while 30 percent of California least tern breeding pairs are found in the spring in several of the areas of concern.

Turner interrupted a week-long tour of Fish and Wildlife Service facilities in California and Nevada to go to Huntington Beach and inspect environmentally-sensitive areas that could be affected.

At approximately 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 7, the fully loaded 811-foot "American Trader" spilled about 9,000 barrels of North Slope crude oil while mooring.

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